



# Within Tuition

Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) Ltd.

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## The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) Ltd Newsletter

### President's Message

Welcome to the second half of the 2008 educational year. This time of year the tutoring sector is traditionally dominated by the demand for help from students who are about to sit for end of school exams in year twelve. This year, unlike most, our industry also has the much discussed "An Even Start (AES)" programme exerting some influence on our businesses.

As generally predicted the Curriculum Corporation is finding it extremely difficult to meet the organisational demands that such a huge (and short term) agenda has placed on our industry. It was always an overly ambitious scheme to try to build a temporary workforce that could provide what is something like 180 000 hours of private tuition through a three to five month period. Unfortunately political agendas that are not soundly thought out do not often achieve the ends we may have all hoped for.

I see the annual year twelve final assessments as raising at least two points of discussion relevant to the membership. First, the demand for our services driven by exams and secondly the way our industry markets ourselves.

The anxiety even the best of students (and parents) feel with the approach of what could be a life-altering experience is always magni-

fied the closer we get to the end of year assessment period.

Good tutoring does provide students with advantages. We help with motivation and organisation on top of providing assistance with understanding content. We provide immediate updates on progress, individual or small group focus, confidence within a support structure, a 'release valve' for students who may feel they are all alone. We provide all this and more, of course. Given this, there should never be a perception of a need for false or misleading advertising.

Tutoring cannot guarantee results, despite the claims of some. The ATA has been very strong in advocating in favour of responsible advertising. We need to be very careful that as an industry we are seen to be responsible in not preying on fears or anxiety - especially at this time of year. Our claims with regards to success need to be reasonable and transparent. We need to be mindful that our advertising is always representing realistic and achievable goals. Our ATA Code of Conduct was implemented with just such aims in mind (see the excerpt on Page 2).

It is interesting to reflect on what sort of driver the competitive nature of exams (especially in year

twelve) has been on demand in our industry. In years gone by tuition was mainly seen as a support mechanism for struggling students. All of that has changed over the last decade. Good tutoring will always provide an advantage to students in a situation where they are competing for, and being compared on, results. Some estimates put the number of year twelve students seeking some form of tuition at over 75%.

Wherever or whenever an exam situation is introduced tuition will follow close behind. Note first the year twelves, but also selective school tests, private school entrance exams, school certificate exams, to name just a few. In all cases our industry becomes a significant player. Parents and students are effectively telling us, through their support, that we do offer significant advantages. Good tutoring, run in an ethical manner, works!

Finally I would like to take this opportunity of welcoming our new Administrative Support staff member, Melanie Lopez, who has joined us recently.

Chris Druett  
ATA President

*Please note that excerpts from the ATA Code of Conduct which relate to advertising are shown on Page 2.*

### Contents Inside this issue:

<b>President's Message</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Membership Renewal Reminder</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Advertising and the ATA Code of Conduct</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>One to One: + Group A tutor's account</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Lobbying news</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Stop Press</b>	<b>4</b>

### Membership Renewal Due Now

ATA membership generally runs out at the end of September and is therefore due for renewal.

The renewal process is simple - just fill out the enclosed form. The insurance premiums are still the lowest around and as a reminder only ATA members can access the insurance at the low rate. The new underwriter is AAMI and Suncorp, both well known Australian insurance providers. As they are on-shore providers premiums will rise but only by the extent to which GST needs to be levied.

## Editorial - International growth and the need for standards everywhere

The ATA currently has around three hundred members in Australia and has been approached recently to look at the option of assisting with the development of a similar body in New Zealand. We have been similarly approached and requested to explore options in Singapore as well. As far as we are aware none of the South East Asian jurisdictions has any representative body, thus outside of USA we are the only one we are aware of.

Unlike our American counterparts we are well placed to assist with the development of Codes of Conduct and the setting up of representative bodies in this region as on a geographical basis alone we are proximate. Moreover, increasing numbers of Australian businesses are seeking to diversify their income through entry into offshore markets. Badging with the ATA or with a body representing similar values can be a strong point of distinction in markets where, as in Australia, there is no direct regulation.

Of course, each nation has its own unique parameters and legal system, educational expectations and social mores thus it would not be expected that all national bodies would mirror the ATA Code. However, there is no doubt that the ATA is very significant in light of global changes to education and the increased global emphasis on the value of education in improving the life chances and outcomes facing young people.



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## Advertising and the ATA Code of Conduct Mohan Dhall

A Member must not use misleading or false advertising or marketing practices, which may include, but are not limited to, false or misleading representations concerning the price of tutoring services, false representations that tutoring services have benefits that they do not have; false or misleading representations concerning the need for tutoring. The provisions of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cth) and any State/Territory based consumer protection legislation apply, as well as the provisions of this Code.

Any claims made by Members in the course of advertising or marketing in any media are to be honest, accurate and verifiable. The compilation and use of statistics should not intend to, or be

presented in such a way, as to mislead clients. Only relevant statistics compiled from verifiable data may be used.

A Member must ensure that promotional material does not encourage unrealistic expectations about the outcomes attainable from tutoring.

A Member must not make misleading or false comparisons with programs offered by competitors.

A Full Member is entitled to use the letters M.A.T.A. whereas an Affiliate Member may only use the letters A.A.T.A. to signify membership of the ATA.

A Full Member may use the ATA logo on any or all advertising media provided he/she is in compliance with

this Code. An Affiliate Member may not use the logo.

### Ownership of student results

It is not in the spirit of the Code of Conduct to claim ownership of student results. Thus, newspaper advertisements that list students and their university entrance scores imply that the business is somehow responsible.

It is necessary for businesses that seek to affirm students in this manner publish a disclaimer that clearly states that a student's success is the result of numerous factors. Whilst a tutor may have acted as a mentor and thus given support, the primary person responsible for student success is the student. Parents and schools are also central.



## One to One: + Group by Pamela Davies

I have a small private tutoring practice. My own office, where I am currently writing mid-term reviews of the programs and strategies in place for each student, is a relatively isolated professional environment. A particularly valuable note in my diary therefore is the date of our local independent tutors' network meeting, and particular acknowledgment is due to the inspired tutor who saw the needs and made the contacts to establish our group!

This forum provides many benefits. Centrally, it is an opportunity to share with other independent tutors the experiences of teaching in a wide variety of changing circumstances. Our members meet informally, discussing the particular issues we encounter across the spectrum of our tutoring practices. In the short time since our group formed, we have come to enjoy and value our "staffroom" as a resource and a place for professional support and communication.

Our members are all experienced educators. We are able to draw on our expertise to gain new insights into problems we encounter whilst maintaining confidentiality. We have established referral networks and can provide contacts with professionals in related fields. We work with different schools and in different socio-economic environments: we are able to integrate knowledge of curriculum content and programs delivered by schools at different levels. This gives our individual practice an invaluable broader professional context.

We share dedication to best practice in our work with students. Unfortunately, in the public arena, tutors are sometimes regarded as homework support by parents, and as adjuncts but not colleagues by school staff. However, it is clear that experienced and qualified tutors can provide positive intervention to reframe students' learning skills and self-esteem, resulting in successful academic outcomes. As independent tutors, we deliver flexible models of teaching and individual programs to target the specific needs of our students. We provide specific focus on curriculum areas and mentoring is integral to these processes. Parents become closely and positively aligned with their children's learning. Reporting is continuous and accountability is direct. The tutor group affirms these professional standards and their inherent value in our industry. Its members therefore work to raise the profile of tutoring in our local areas.

On a practical level, we discuss and evaluate teaching resources, involve ourselves in professional development which can be shared, and consolidate our business practices. Our small businesses are all very different, reflecting our various training, levels of experience and educational approaches. The discipline of running the businesses is of course rigorous and time-consuming: it is reassuring to discuss questions of management and effective operation in the micro-environment with others who can offer sound experiential knowledge and referral. We also have a professionally stimulating forum for exploring the broader issues facing the tutoring industry in all its current forms.

One such issue is the discussion currently surrounding the establishment of minimum standards of qualification for tutors. The members of our group all hold post-graduate qualifications in a range of education and counselling fields, and bring together their experience of working in all education sectors and in related fields. Educating however is a magical fabric of interaction in all fields of endeavour. Tutor groups have the potential to provide invaluable support to those new to the industry, who in turn offer new light on current practice.

Working as an independent tutor in secondary education, I continue to be challenged and delighted at the constantly changing kaleidoscope of my teaching week. Now it is mid-term, winter, dark and cold. Energies are low and learning momentum slows. Students cancel and reschedule. Timetables and plans and programs are disrupted. But my appointment diary still tells stories. Among this week's genres are a drama associated with school refusal, a saga of adapting to a new school, a wonderful comedy of ski-camp memories for a writing assignment, a chapter in a jarring narrative of personal struggle with learning difficulties, a love story from a senior students' group tutorial, a family migration history gathered for a research requirement, and even a glorious futuristic fantasy in Career Planning which required a little judicious editing .... I am looking forward to the next Tutor Group coffee morning where I can share the enjoyment of my work, refresh ideas and energies, introduce a new tutor who will join our list, and gain momentum for the next weeks of teaching.

As an ATA Board member, I would be interested to know of any other groups or networks of independent tutors which are in operation. It is also great to hear through the ATA Newsletter the experiences of others in the field.

The ATA is appropriately placed to consider the key issues which concern independent tutors, and to provide support. I can be contacted through the ATA's Sydney office on (02) 9704 5724 or by email: [davies.p@optusnet.com.au](mailto:davies.p@optusnet.com.au).

### Lobbying News

When the labor government first came to office late in 2007, the ATA sent a letter of congratulations to the incoming Education Minister, Julia Gillard. We received no response despite a request for a meeting. This week we are sending further correspondence this time in regards to the New Education Tax Rebate. A copy of the letter is on our website.

Essentially the ATA's position is that tutors comply with the requirement for eligible expenses to be "items that support a child during school and improve the quality of education".

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### **ATA Board Meetings**

The ATA Board meets from time to time (4 times per year face-to-face) and conducts regular teleconferences. The ATA Board aims to improve the range of services offered to ATA members. Members are welcome to contribute items for the Board to discuss through contacting one of the Board members or emailing the ATA at the addresses listed below. Members are invited to contribute to the newsletter, which is published quarterly. The ATA Newsletter is distributed in hard copy form to all members and is also available on the ATA website for download.

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### **Contacting Us**

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### **STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS**

#### **ATA Updates:**

#### **An Even Start (AES)**

The early anecdotal prognosis for the AES program is not looking good. Schools and tutors have reported to the ATA that they find the administrative processes cumbersome and confusing. Moreover, there is much concern that the students most in need will once again miss out. The hope was that this time around the money would be well spent and help the students most in need of literacy and numeracy support. There was also a hope that the administrative framework and processes would be sufficiently settled to avoid a timing issue which would place students and tutors under pressure. However, to date it seems that the very things most desired for a successful program will be the things most wanting. We remain open but watch developments with interest.

#### **Sticker availability**

The ATA has stickers available for car bumpers and for windows of premises. All new members received two such stickers upon acceptance of membership. Additional stickers can be purchased from \$1 each from the office.

#### **Back Issues of the Newsletter**

Previous issues of the ATA newsletter are available upon request. Moreover, they can be downloaded from the ATA website: [www.ata.edu.au](http://www.ata.edu.au).